SPAWN

THE DARK AGES

20

DIGITAL EDITION

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TODD McFARLANE AND IMAGE COMICS PRESENT

VOICES IN THE DARK

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SUMMARY

As Spawn wanders the countryside, a new threat appears. Viking murderers have arrived, and they are drawn like flies to the unprotected town of Rhyll. Covenant, who is seeking basic human comforts for the first time since his death, befriends a farmer who tells the tale of his wife's disappearance at the hands of Brakert. Covenant rides off to kill Brakert and free the farmer's wife, but forgets that he no longer has the powers of a Hellspawn. When it's revealed he's killed Brakert, Covenant is soon overwhelmed by a violent crowd, and they prepare to throw him in the pit.

TODD McFARLANE PRODUCTIONS

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Are you still with us?
...yes...
Tell us who you are, boyo. Where is it you came from?
...Covenant... Iain... Covenant... I came from --
...Covenant? That's impossible! He died a long time ago! I have heard many a tale about him, but all of them say he finally died.
I... am... dead...
You're delirious is what you are, stranger. You took one 'ell of a beating.
They tell us you killed Brakert. Tell us it's true.
It... is true.
Then if you want to be a dead man, that's okay with us, Boyo! Any man who kills that bastard is a hero in these old eyes!
Eye is more like it, William! Ha!
Aye, piss off you lumpy headed rat-eater.
Did you hear what I said, Boyo. You may have made enemies up top, but you made some friends down 'ere.
Are you still with us?
Boyo? Stranger? Covenant? Are you there?
I think we lost 'em again.

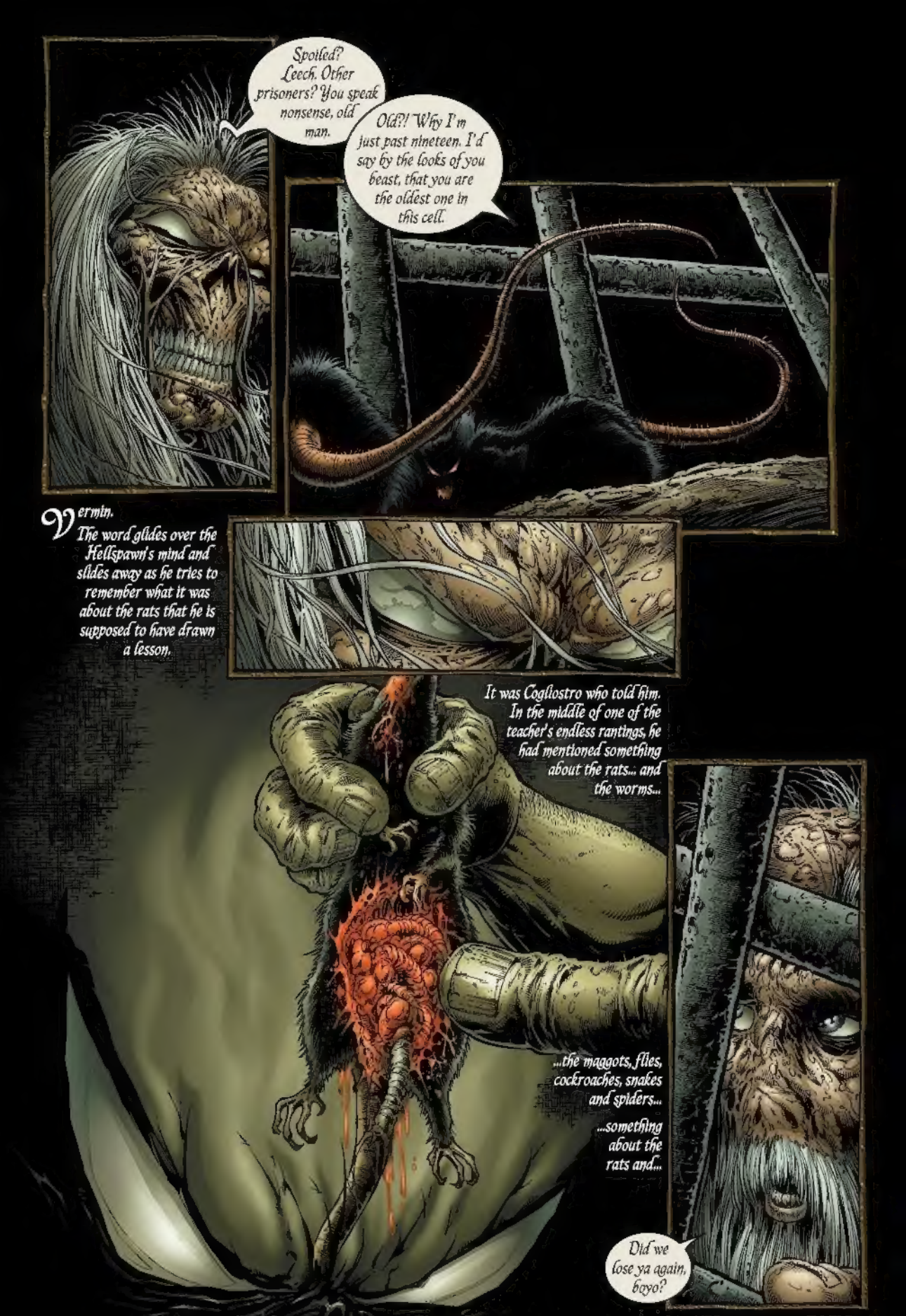
There once was a handsome young man named Covenant who hungered for adventure, and after an affair of the heart blemished his soul, he very much wanted to prove himself worthy in the eyes of his God.
But what can a man do who seeks the absolution of God? He can join a Holy mission and help wipe the godless from God's anointed Land. And that is what Covenant did to cleanse his soul.
With troops at his side Covenant invaded the foreign land and attempted to dislodge the brown-skinned heathens from God's earth.
Many of the infidels fell to his sword, but in the end, the soldiers of the Holy mission fell under sheer numbers.
Covenant was among the fallen.

When they ran him through the first time he did not wince. He knew God was watching, and Covenant knew that his God would not allow pain to come to him.
But this was not to be.
The godless hordes hacked at Covenant with the precision of a butcher at market. They took his organs. They sliced away his flesh, layer by layer until flesh gave way to muscle and they hacked and sliced through that until clean white bone shimmered in the hot sun of the desert.
All the while, Covenant prayed and waited to be delivered. Even as they hacked away his handsome features, Covenant would not allow them the pleasure of a scream.
He died in silence, but his God was not there waiting at the gate.
Instead a dark force took him. His God had turned his back. Sir Iain Covenant, killer of sinners, was delivered into the waiting arms of Malebolgia.
For all his faith, Covenant was rewarded with Hell.
He was transformed. to live again, he would serve the darkness.
He was cast out of Hell and spit back to earth where again he fell into the arms of a different kind of Hell. Man's Hell where he would be a hero, a monster, a king and then a monster again.
Are you still with us?

I think we lost 'em again.
Nooooooooo!
The fever is breaking. I think he's coming around.
He's got it bad.
Covenant?

Covenant?
What? Who? Where am I?!
They call me William, and yer where you been for over a week, boyo. You been having a Hell of a time over there. Brodi and I thought you'd die for sure.
But we been praying for you, stranger. We heard, we did, that you cut Brakert's head right from his bastard shoulders.
I remember... now... you spoke with me. But where have they taken me? What is this place?
This is the pit. This is where those too low to live among the thieves and scum above are sent.
We are below the city then?
A little below, and just short of Hell.
But we're special, we are. We get this cozy hole all to ourselves. This is where they put the defects.
Spoiled.
Ha! Ha! - COUGH - Ha!
Ha! Ha! Spoiled! cough-cough-cough-ha!

What do you mean? There are others?
There is more than this one room below. There are others to be sure. More than you can count. They take travelers from the roads and kidnap babes right from their mothers' backs to be brought here.
I do not understand. Why are we kept here?
Like we said, we're what you call sickly and the like. I have a yellow illness that eats at my organs and William over there's got the plague.
It's called leprosy, dolt. That's what I got eatin' away at me flesh. And I'm guessing when they got a look at you in the light, they assumed the same. You do have a leprous look about you, boyo.
But why are we not kept with the other prisoners?
Aaarar-slurrrrg-raaggahahahhgh!
Just let's say this... it's better to be in here. In here all we have to worry about is Leech.


Spoiled? Leech. Other prisoners? You speak nonsense, old man.
Old?! Why I'm just past nineteen. I'd say by the looks of you beast, that you are the oldest one in this cell.
Vermin.
The word glides over the Hellspawn's mind and slides away as he tries to remember what it was about the rats that he is supposed to have drawn a lesson.
It was Cogliostro who told him. In the middle of one of the teacher's endless rantings, he had mentioned something about the rats... and the worms...
...the maggots, flies, cockroaches, snakes and spiders...
...something about the rats and...
Did we lose ya again, boyo?

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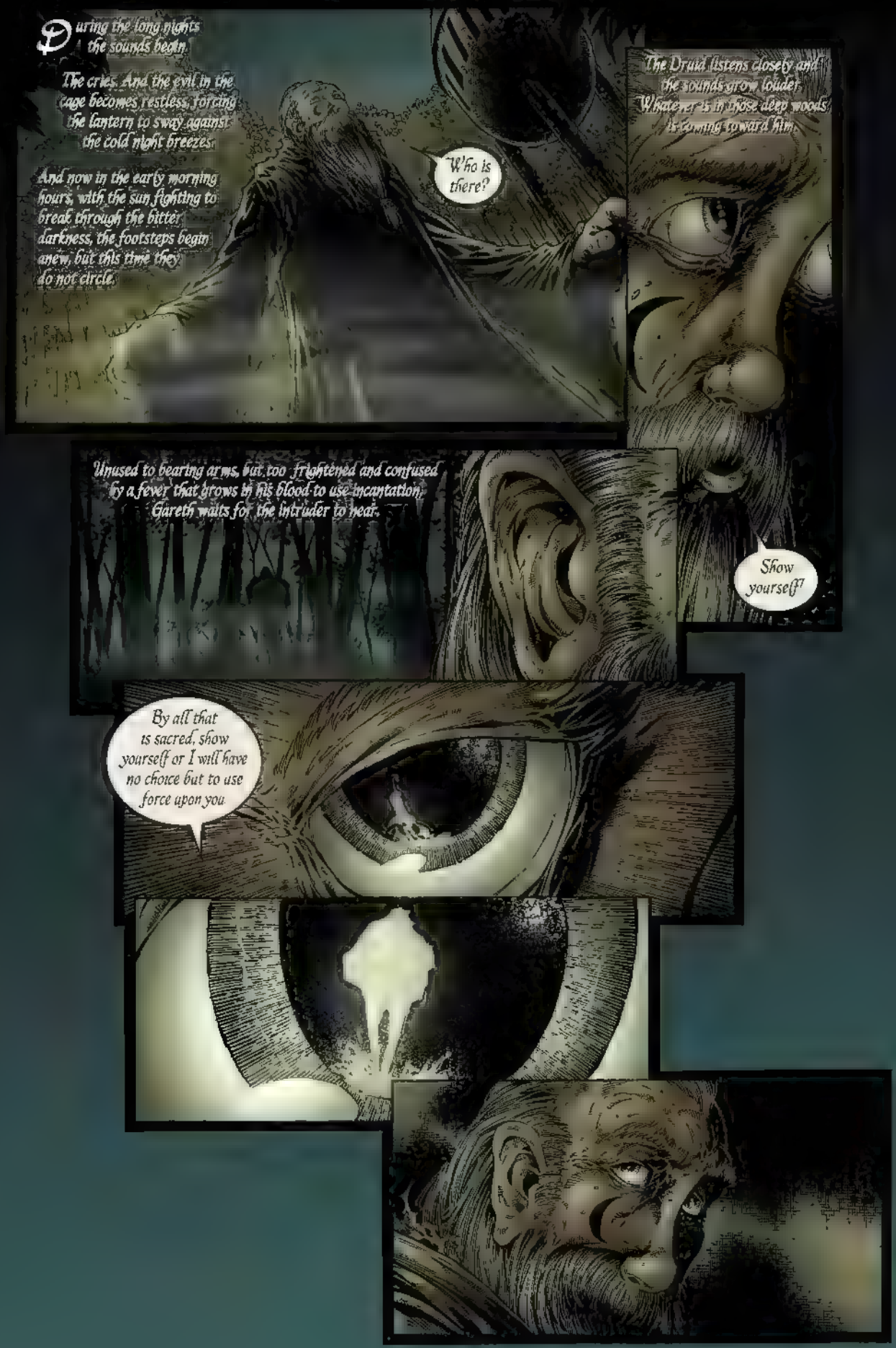
Did ya hear what I said, boyo? I'm no old man!
He doesn't know.
He doesn't understand.
Forgive me. I was rash. I was confused. I...I do not understand. What is this Leech and why are we separated from the others?
Enlighten the poor soul.
So we don't contaminate them before they're done.
And as for Leech... you're about to discover who he is...
Suddenly, from the silence, a sound.
...soon enough.
Soft at first, distant, then rising.
Footsteps in the muddy halls outside the door. The sound of one heavy foot hitting, followed by the dragging of another.
And then another.

Wake up bastard scum Leech got a visitor to the Pit
Even in his groggy state, Covenant knew who the visitor was.
He could hear the tight, carefully placed footsteps avoiding the mud-puddles in the flooring. He could hear the muffled breaths of disgust as the visitor tried desperately to breathe through a handkerchief.
But mostly, it was the smell. The bitter stingy, sweet scent of perfume covering the smell of sweat, desperation, sadness, and the unbelievable stench from the rooms beyond.
It was the new Lord of the City of Thieves once called Turnbold.
It was the Lord that Covenant himself had created with the edge of his blade now coming to pay his regards.

North.
Too many days have passed since Gareth last saw the Iceni warrior called Makus. Supplies, both food and water have run low. Makus set out to replenish, but in his absence strange noises have begun sounding from the woods.
Strange, unnatural sounds. Cries, shrieks, howls and moans.
Sometimes sounding like they came from directly inside the Druid's hut. Sometimes from inside his own head.
Together, the Druid and the Iceni warrior have taken a sacred oath on mother earth, sworn to stand vigil over the evil contained in the lantern-cage.
During the short days the woods rustle and footsteps can be heard circling, scouting the hut and its occupants.


During the long nights the sounds begin.
The cries. And the evil in the cage becomes restless, forcing the lantern to sway against the cold night breezes.
And now in the early morning hours, with the sun fighting to break through the bitter darkness, the footsteps begin anew, but this time they do not circle.
Who is there?
The Druid listens closely and the sounds grow louder. Whatever is in those deep woods is coming toward him.
Unused to bearing arms, but too frightened and confused by a fever that grows in his blood to use incantation, Gareth waits for the intruder to near.
Show yourself?
By all that is sacred, show yourself or I will have no choice but to use force upon you

You had me frightened, Iceni. Why did you not speak when I called out?
I could not be sure you were alone until I saw with my own eyes. Forgive my silence.
I bring supplies from the south, grains, meat and wine and I have news coming from the lands whence this creature Covenant came.
Go on. What is this news?
Men from the other lands have invaded... the Vikings. They have over run the village that Lord Covenant ruled. Most of the men are dead The women are being used, the children enslaved.
There is a conviction in the warrior monk voice that worries the Druid priest. The Iceni are a proud, vain people whose choices are frequently made in rash whims of honour and righteousness.
Gareth knows that the Iceni aim to return and fight battle, but the time is not right. Guarding the wall must take claim above all else.
Nothing can be done now, Makus. Trust me The people of Rhyll put their faith in Covenant and now, because of what he was, they have fallen into enemy hands. It is not our battle to fight.
But the woman? The children?!
We both know what it is to be driven from our land. You have watched your people fall to almost complete extinction and I, my order has become all but annihilated in the face of the new order We must choose our battles wisely and staying here with the evil, keeping it from the hands of others is the battle, slow though it is, that we must fight.
You are right, of course. I let my heart get past by head. Forgive me.
You never have to beg forgiveness for having a good heart.
Now please, Makus, help me lift the supplies into the hut and then we shall pray for the people of Rhyll and even the creature Covenant, though, by now I am sure he is beyond prayers.

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Below Turnbold, the city of thieves.
The Hellspawn was correct.
It was a grave error of judgement on the Hellspawn's part.
Leech bring new master to see scum rot in pit. Eat bastard scum! Eat!
The boy sold him out and Covenant had no doubt that the boy saw to it that he would rot in this hole.
Do you know who I am, monster?
I saved you. You turned me in.
My name is Marcellus and you should know, you can not save that which does not need to be saved.
Yes... I see that now. But to others, he inflicted pain and slavery. He was...
It was the boy Covenant thought he had saved from the hands of the oppressive Brakert, the boy in chains, who the Hellspawn had assumed was a slave.
I loved him. He loved me You killed him. For that you will pay with unbelievable agony for as long as it can be sustained

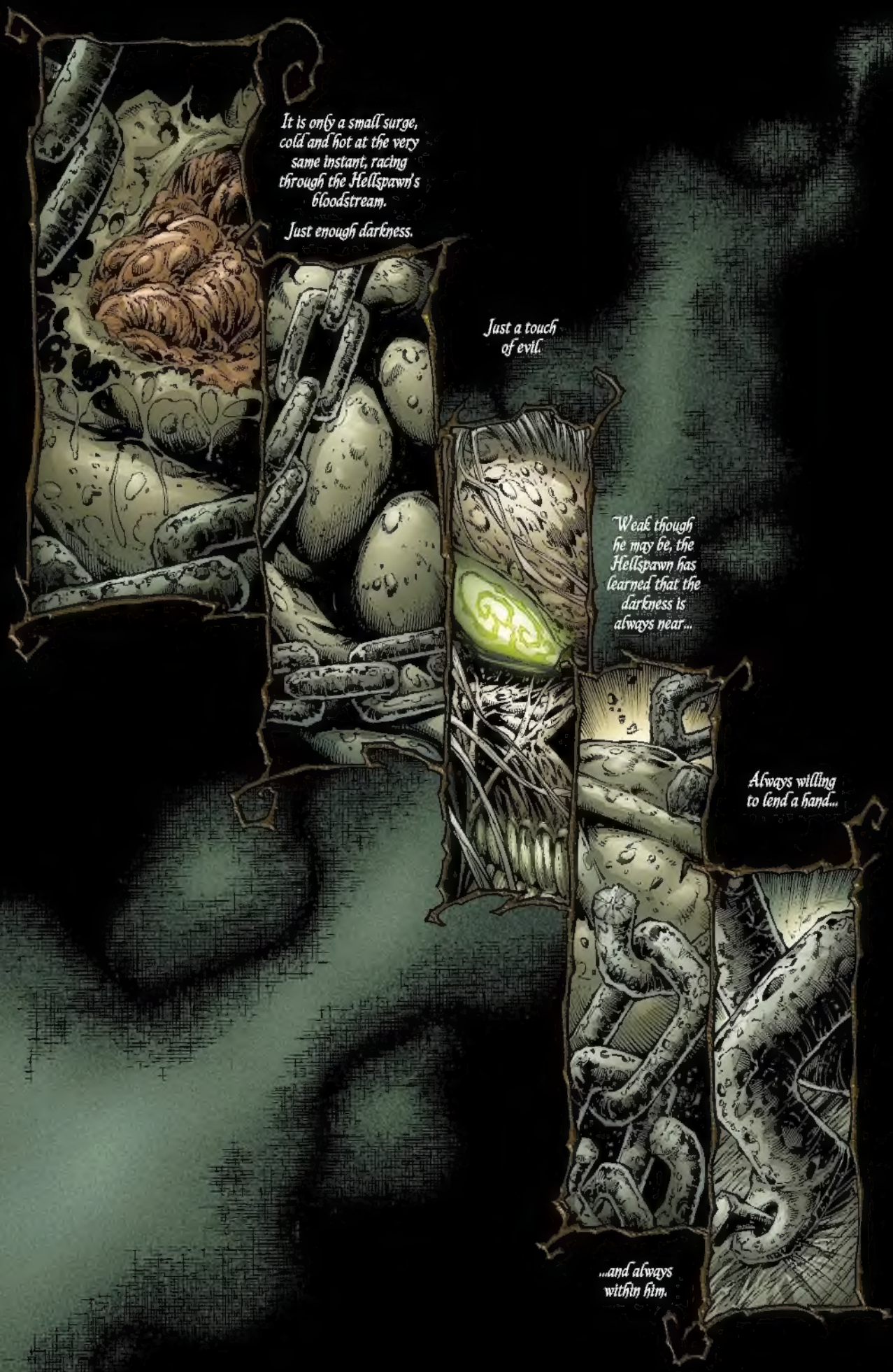
Guards! Leech. Bind him and bring him to the rotund. I want him to see Brakert's workshop
Of course we'll feed you first. A specialty of Turnbold. Are you hungry?
Tie the scum! Tie the scum! Hee Hee!

The smell...
My god, what is that stench?!
Could this really be the way it all ends? Tied in a madman's torture chamber
I know that you came here to free one of the wenches, and though noble I find your intent, you should have thought twice about coming to this modest town. It is not quite what it seems on the surface... well, maybe it is at that, but there is so much more beneath the obvious hive of villainy.
Eat! Eat!
Gaaah! I do not care to hear your secrets. Do what ever you intend to do and spare me your lip.
In the corner of his eyes... a rat... Cogliostro's words... remember damn you Covenant, remember!
No, no. I want to tell you. You see we are in the midst of a great change in this country. Land is being fought over like meat in a dog's mouth and starvation and disease are everywhere. We ourselves faced starvation on many occasion until Brackert convinced us that a food supply was right at our fingertips.
Leech, stop feeding him and light the torches. Let him see the mill.
But it's not there. Why had he not listened when he had the chance? Why had he not listened?!
Behold. our secret and the last thing you will ever see
Rats, snakes, flies and worms.s
No!

A hundred wars could not prepare the Hellspawn for the horror unleashed before his eyes.
Each cell revealing a greater horror than the one before it.
Each man, shredded, cut, for meat, in the mouths of thieves. For the first time in his life the Hellspawn saw a greater evil than that of Malebolgia.
This was Hell. Here on earth in this hole in the ground. In the smell, the sights and...the taste in his mouth.
Tell me beast. how does Brakert taste?

Cogliostro's words... remember, damn you Covenant, remember!
Rats, snakes, flies and worms!
Rats, snakes, flies and worms!
Aahhhhrrr!
Remember!
Block out the pain. Find Cogliostro's words.
Finally it comes, locked away in a dusty corner of the Hellspawn's mind... Cog... reading from a book... penned by his own hand...
Remember this, Hellspawn .. as the war is waged, earth will be divided into two sides and this will involve all creatures. There will be creatures of the light and creatures of the dark. Rats, snakes, flies and worms. Cockroaches, maggots...

Though they are part of the darkness... these beasts can help you when your energy is low.
This isn't sharp enough. Find me something sharper!
The Hellspawn's only chance...
The rat is his only chance. But will he not be giving in to the darkness? Will Malebolgia see the deed and claim victory?
The options are weighted. Humanity or life? Honor or death?
Where is the one with the spikes and blades?
Spikes and blades! Spikes and blades!
At the hands of these savages, the answer is clear...
...Eat the rat! Make them pay!


It is only a small surge, cold and hot at the very same instant, racing through the Hellspawn's bloodstream.
Just enough darkness.
Just a touch of evil.
Weak though he may be, the Hellspawn has learned that the darkness is always near...
Always willing to lend a hand...
...and always within him.

There will be many lessons learned on this dark day beneath the city of Turnbold.
This should have an interesting effect.
Leech stab scum! Stab scum!
Scu... scu... scu...
Never enter a battle without knowing the full capabilities of your enemy.
Never assume a victim is a victim.
Never believe that one has seen the darkest side of the human soul until you have searched the bottom of the human cesspool.
G...g... gau...
And never...
...guards...
...ever...

... turn your back on a Hellspawn.

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